(c) whether the panchayats will be given the authority to decide the watershed catchment to be forestry oriented; and

(d) whether a common norm of implementation will be formulated for watershed programmes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ANNASAHEB M.K. PATIL): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. A proposal is under consideration to set up a National Mission for Land and Watershed Development in the Department of Land Resources and to transfer watershed and soil conservation related activities from different Ministries to the Department of Land Resources.

(c) and (d) The Department of Land Resources has launched a new initiative called "Hariyali" on 27th January, 2003 with the objective of empowering the Panchayati Raj Institutions both administratively and financially for the implementation of all Watershed Development Programmes. Under this, it is proposed that all Watershed Development Programmes of the Department of land Resources shall be implemented by the Gram Panchayats under the guidance and control of the Gram Sabha. The Action Plan/Watershed Treatment Plan will be finalized after discussion in the Gram Sabha. It is upto Gram Sabha to decide the type of watershed activity to be taken up as per location specific requirement/suitability.

Implementation of Swajaldhara Project in N.E. States

†2917. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the amount allocated by Government for the implementation of "Swajaldhara" drinking water project in North East States; and

(b) the number of the proposals received so far from the concerned State Governments in this regard and necessary action taken by Government thereon?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ANNASAHEB M.K. PATIL): (a) Swajaldhara proposals are being implemented in participatory project mode. In the financial year 2002-03, the projects are sanctioned based on the proposal received from the State Governments.

(b) Among the North Eastern States only 55 Swajaldhara proposals received from Assam Government were sanctioned by National Scheme Sanctioning Committee for an outlay of Rs. 832.68 lakh.

Postponement of loan recovery by banks from drought affected farmers

†2918. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have postponed the recovery of loan by banks from the farmers in drought affected States;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the interest rate on the loans given to farmers has also been exempted by the banks to provide relief to farmers in badly hit drought affected States; and

(c) if so, the affected State-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ANNASAHEB M.K. PATIL): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

BPL families in Uttaranchal

2919. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to refer to the answers to Unstarred Questions 1523 and 1527 given in the Rajya Sabha on 5th March, 2003 and state:

(a) the number of families living in Uttaranchal below poverty line, district-wise; and

(b) what is the criteria fixed to recognise them below poverty line especially living in far-flung areas of this State?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.